



Indiana Department of Education

SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

April 8, 2010

Mr. Nate Schnellenberger
President
Indiana State Teachers Association
150 W. Market St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Mr. Schnellenberger:

As you know, the United States Department of Education last week released the reviewers' comments regarding Race to the Top (RttT) applications. My team has now conducted an extensive review of those comments, the applications of the two winning states, reviewer comments regarding those applications, and many other applications and comments.

As the State of Indiana (State) prepares to apply for funding in Round 2 of the RttT competition, we are revising our application, primarily to provide additional detail to address the reviewers' requests for further information. While we are taking these steps to strengthen the technicalities of our application, the State remains convinced that with or without federal funding, *Fast Forward* is the right plan to improve the educational achievement of Indiana students. Based on our comprehensive review of the national RttT landscape, it is apparent that the core principles underlying Indiana's *Fast Forward* reform agenda are sound and that the strategy Indiana has set forth is consistent with the plans being advanced by the most forward-thinking states across the country.

It is clear – from the reviewers' comments on the applications of the two RttT winners – that one factor is crucial to a successful application: strong statewide support from the teachers' union. Both Delaware and Tennessee offered bold reform plans, similar to those outlined in Indiana's application, in the Great Teachers and Leaders section of the application. Still, Delaware's application received 100% support from the teachers' union, and the president of the state teachers' union traveled to Washington, D.C., to deliver part of the state's presentation to RttT judges. Similarly, Tennessee enjoyed the support of 93% of local association leaders in addition to a strong letter of support from the statewide union. The unions in both states even supported changes to state laws regarding evaluation, locking in reforms statewide and beyond the end of the grant.

Each of Indiana's RttT reviewers noted that Indiana's application offered signatures from just over 60% of local association leaders and several commented specifically about the lack of a strong letter of support from the Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA). This was not good enough for Round 1 of the competition, and it certainly will not be good enough for the increasingly-competitive Round 2.

The Round 1 results make clear that if Indiana is to be successful in obtaining up to \$250M in Round 2, the State and ISTA must agree to substantial reforms. To have a credible application that keeps pace with the winning and high-scoring states, Indiana cannot compromise on certain foundational tenets of

RttT. Given the scoring rubric as it was applied by the Round 1 reviewers, it is clear that if ISTA will not agree to these basic principles, Indiana will fail in Round 2. If this is the case, Indiana will not apply.

Accordingly, I ask for your unequivocal agreement to the following proposals which will ensure all students have great teachers and administrators throughout their school years:

- ISTA will support a statewide annual teacher and principal evaluation plan in which the evaluation follows the attached guidelines developed by IDOE, in partnership with several pilot districts, which require at least 51% of the evaluation to be based on student growth data;
- ISTA will support legislation requiring use of the evaluation to inform decisions regarding hiring, retention, transfer, and reductions-in-force and is prepared to make all necessary changes to P.L.110 and P.L.217 to support this legislation;
- ISTA will support legislation to require use of this evaluation in determining teacher and leader compensation;
- ISTA will support rule changes to teacher and leader licensing that will require the use of student growth data as a key factor for determining whether a license is renewed; and
- ISTA will memorialize its support of these components of the RttT application with a strong letter of support and a recommendation that local associations sign on in support of the *Fast Forward* plan.

The State recognizes the importance of local decision-making under both Indiana law and current collective bargaining practice. Notably, however, the RttT reviewers' comments indicate that deference to local decision-making is insufficient. It is imperative that support from the state-level organization be strong if Indiana is to apply in Round 2. Further, a recommendation from ISTA carries significant weight with the local associations, and a strong message will encourage them to support the application. For this reason, we need your support, we need it in writing, and we need it soon.

Indiana's RttT application has been a public document for nearly three months, and we do not intend to change, nor can we afford to negotiate away, these crucial components of the plan. If ISTA does not agree to support all five of the components listed above, Indiana will not apply in Round 2, as the Round 1 results have made clear that doing so would be a futile effort.

Please signify, in writing, whether you are willing to support all five components. We need a response within one week of the date of this letter if we are to move forward in applying for Round 2.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Bennett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Tony Bennett
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Indiana Department of Education
Guidelines for Measuring Teacher and Principal Effectiveness

"The Obama administration aims to reward states that use student achievement as a "predominant" part of teacher evaluations with the extra stimulus funds — and pass over those that don't."

-Joanne S. Weiss, NewSchools Venture Fund and Race to the Top Director.

The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) is committed to improving the quality of instruction and leadership in Indiana's schools. To reach this goal we must focus on teacher and principal quality by accurately assessing individual performance. Recognizing that teacher and principal effectiveness are the most important factors in improving student achievement, teachers and principals must be credibly evaluated on their ability to impact student outcomes and growth. Districts must reexamine their evaluation tools and begin to use them to inform district policies regarding hiring, laying off, professional development, compensation, promotions, and retention. IDOE has established these guidelines to provide a clear bar for developing teacher and principal evaluation instruments. By adopting these guidelines, a district still must follow applicable state laws.

In considering teacher and principal evaluation system, districts must:

- Adopt a common evaluation tool for teachers and principals.
- Incorporate student performance/growth on ISTEP+ to count for at least 51% of the total evaluation score.
- Use a multiple rating scale consisting of 4 categories: highly effective, effective, improvement necessary, and ineffective.
- Ensure teacher and principal performance data shows meaningful differentiation of effectiveness across the ratings spectrum; the State will expect that the school corporations aggregate evaluations show a credible distribution across the spectrum. Moreover, there must be parity in distribution between tested and non-tested grades/subjects.
- Provide an annual evaluation for all teachers and principals.
- Include close examination of key performance metrics (e.g. purposeful planning, classroom culture, effective instructional techniques, and professional leadership).
- Create a collaborative goal-setting component for teachers and principals to set their own instructional and growth goals specific to student achievement and teacher or principal effectiveness.
- Specify the support and intervention which will be provided for teachers not rated as "highly effective" or "effective." (e.g. improvement plans, professional development and dismissal protocols) and provide clear consequences for unsatisfactory performance.
- Use teacher and principal evaluation data to guide district, school, and individual professional development plans.
- Train and support evaluators to effectively implement evaluation.
- Use teacher and principal evaluations, at a minimum, to inform decisions regarding:
 - (a) Developing teachers and principals, including by providing relevant coaching, induction support, and/or professional development;
 - (b) Compensating, promoting, and retaining teachers and principals, including by providing opportunities for highly effective teachers and principals to obtain additional compensation and be given additional responsibilities;
 - (c) Whether to grant tenure and/or full certification (where applicable) to teachers and principals using rigorous standards and streamlined, transparent, and fair procedures; and
 - (d) Removing ineffective tenured and untenured teachers and principals after they have had ample opportunities to improve, and ensuring that such decisions are made using rigorous standards and streamlined, transparent, and fair procedures.
- Train and support teachers in peer assistance and/or teacher leader programs.